1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



through the house floor; and it is probably the same notion at work: if the animal were to eat the afterbirth it might have an adverse effect on the woman's fecundity. 844

In the one instance of which I have definite information the confinement took place in the afternoon and the child was at the breast next morning. Suckling may continue till the child has long passed the stage of learning to walk, though it is treated to a variety of solid foods as well. [853]

During the first few days of the child's life its father must avoid the dangers of gardening. If he were to strike at a young sapling with his axe it would be as if he struck at his baby's neck, with the possible result that 'the blood would come up' and the child choke and die. This association of ideas I have met with several times, and Mr. Flint records the same, as if it were a somewhat ghastly obsession. 'One man told me he could not fell a tree until his child was two days old. I asked him the reason. He informed me that if he did so it would be the same as cutting his baby's throat.' This couvade-like practice is very general. In rather extreme form it appears in another of Mr. Flint's instances. His interpreter at Kokoda had washed clothes the day his first child was born, with what proved to be fatal results. On the birth of his second he applied for two days' leave from the office, lest this child should die too, and needless to say received it from a sympathetic master, though his work consisted merely in interpreting.[1] It is for a somewhat different reason that the father refuses to plant taro too soon after his child is born: here he is considering his garden, for the plant would rot in the ground like the buried placenta. 846

It is said that abnormal children would be strangled at birth and buried, and this is probably true. But whether a mother would destroy a child who simply made one too many in her family and necessitated unwelcome work and trouble, is certainly a matter of doubt, although it has been declared to be the case by one or two witnesses. It is at least certain that a child who had lived long enough to find a place in its parents' affections would not be deliberately killed. But as life in itself is regarded very lightly, it is by 847

[1] *Annual Report*, 1924–5, p. 47.

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



847 no means impossible that infanticide is practised. Upon this vexed question, however, I have on the one hand no tangible evidence, and on the other a great number of denials.

553 608 *Naming.* It is necessary to make sure that the child is to survive and thrive before a name is given it, though the reason for this delay is not made clear. There seems to be no actual formality of name-giving, but some person is asked to stand godfather or godmother to the child, who will take his or her name. This person is called *tato* (a reciprocal term between godfather and godchild). There is no reluctance on the part of the *tato* to undertake the few obligations which belong to this relationship. A man wishes to have his name carried on by another after his death. If he have children he hopes that one of them will honour him by bestowing his name on a grandson. If he be childless he exclaims, 'Who will catch my name?' and hopes that some friend or relative will solve the difficulty by asking him to stand as *tato* to one of his children. An old woman said she expected one of her daughters to name a future child after her; adding, however, that if she did not—well, it would not matter; she would just die without leaving her name behind her. I know of no article of belief which would make this namesake system necessary. The principal motive appears to be the desire not to be forgotten. Not infrequently the relation is a posthumous one: the relatives of the deceased say they are 'very sorry for him' and must not allow him to be forgotten. The two *tato* do not stand in any special kin relationship to one another. In various instances noted, the elder has been to the younger either *abije* (pat. grandfather), *abije* (mat. grandfather), *mama* (pat. uncle), *nobo*, and *simbo*; and in the case of women, *abije* (mat. grandmother) and *tata*. A woman may pay a second husband the compliment of naming his son after her first husband, so as to perpetuate the latter's memory.

608 431 A few mutual obligations belong to the *tato*. At the child's birth his *tato* brings firewood for the comfort of mother and child; and a female *tato* is supposed to wash the new-born baby. Continual presents of food are given, and the elder *tato* will take an interest in and make a pet of the

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



*Teh, teh!*—'Kill, kill!'—in the hopes of finding a dead bird under the wreckage. The villagers hoard their pig-jaws partly as mementoes and trophies, but also, as they sometimes explain, to ensure subsequent success in the hunt. To throw away the jaws where they would be lost to sight in the bush would be in some manner to throw away the hunter's chance of catching pigs. A pregnant woman who desires a male child conceals a mangrove stamen under her bark-cloth skirt. The stamen is said to resemble a penis, and so its influence in the matter of sex-determination is obvious enough. As far as I know the woman uses no other medicine, i.e. no specific, to help the mangrove stamen in its work. A pregnant woman who desires no child at all will slash the skin of a cucumber about its middle, and then slash herself about the middle: the cucumber rots and the woman has a miscarriage. This is only one of the many methods of abortion—old wives' remedies which are really made effective by pummelling and violence. It is not a secret, and in this case, as far as I know, there is no mysterious medicine.

Now it is hard to come by an explanation, a rationale, of his own magic from a native. In so far as set methods have replaced originality in magic the native learns these methods without troubling as to their why and wherefore. Where there is originality the magic is, as we shall see, more impulsive than rational. In either case he does not think the methods out. But sometimes a rather exceptional informant can explain them or give their reasons. And, indeed, to one who sees much of native magic, these methods take on a sort of obviousness. The obviousness, however, the why and wherefore, appertain to the procedure, not to the specific. They stop short at what is really the unknown factor. The man who goes through the whole magical practice may feel tolerably clear as to the significance of the procedure, but he can have only a blind faith in the specific.

Given, therefore, that in what we call native magic

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



However, it is possible that the magic-maker, particularly the sorcerer, may sometimes succeed in bringing about the result he aims at. This might happen in either of two ways—directly, by the use of really harmful substances, or indirectly, by suggestion. If he use any harmful substance which has a demonstrable effect on the victim, it may fairly be argued that from our point of view he has abandoned the role of sorcerer for that of poisoner; but we may proceed to discuss this aspect even if by strict definition it should be excluded from the subject.

It is often maintained that natives hold the secret of many genuine poisons, and sometimes that the sorcerer is an out-and-out poisoner. The principal drawback to this view is that those who hold it are commonly unable to produce or identify the poisons which the sorcerer is supposed to use. The same is true of those abortifacient and contraceptive drugs which in the opinion of some observers *must* belong to a native pharmacology which is kept strictly secret from the prying European. One would be disposed to place some credence in this latter opinion if only its exponents could bring to light one really efficacious example. With regard to the poisons which are supposed to be used in sorcery one is tempted to be almost equally sceptical.

There is little doubt that the bush could furnish a number of vegetable poisons of a more or less dangerous nature, and no doubt that the native knows how to avoid some kinds of food which are injurious. But if we are to suppose that any of these substances are used in poisoning it will be necessary to assume that they are of a sufficiently deadly character to be effective in small and unnoticeable quantity. One may mention several of the better-known products which are recognized as poisons by the Orokaiva. First and foremost there is the vine *Anisi* (which belongs to the genus *Derris*), known as 'New Guinea Dynamite' because it is used for killing or stunning fish just as real dynamite is sometimes used by those who care little for the law of the land and less for the ethics of angling.